

U.S. Moves to Meet Communist Threat

By Marquis Childs

Post 6/14/63
IN THE FRANTIC hours after President Johnson ordered the Marines into the Dominican Republic the search was not only for a solution to the chaos in that tortured island but for a legal and moral justification for this radical step.

The decision was taken late in the afternoon of April 28. On the following Sunday, May 2, with criticism both at home and abroad rising to a crescendo, the President decided on a televised address. The aim was to show that the Dominican action was not new and in no way initiated a "Johnson Doctrine."

His hard-working staff began an intensive review of the files for documentation and inevitably they combed the recorded words of John F. Kennedy. One staff member produced in a hurriedly drafted memorandum a quotation the President did not use but one which would have served his purposes. Addressing the American Society of Newspaper Editors shortly after the ill-starred Bay of Pigs adventure in 1961, Kennedy said it had been made repeatedly clear that American armed forces would not intervene since "unilateral American intervention, in the absence of an external attack upon ourselves or an ally, would have been contrary to our traditions and to our international obligations." Then he added:

"But let the record show that our restraint is not inexhaustible. Should it ever appear that the inter-American doctrine of noninterference merely conceals or excuses a policy of non-action—if the nations of this hemisphere should fail to meet their commitments against outside Communist penetration—then I want it clearly understood that this government will not hesitate in meeting its primary obligations which are to the security of our Nation."

THIS, AS Mr. Johnson's closest advisers see it, is the circumstance with which he was confronted. He was faced, as Kennedy had not been, with the imminent peril of a Communist take-over and he acted.

The dispute will go on for a long time over whether the facts justified action before a serious attempt had been made to get the approval of the Organization of American States. The question

essentially is whether the Dominican intervention and now the rapid escalation of the American role in Viet-Nam differ in kind or merely in degree from similar steps taken in the past 20 years.

It is a question deserving thorough exploration, since it goes to the heart of American foreign policy. That policy, in the view of an increasing number of critics, is stuck on a formula so rigid — the containment of communism everywhere — that it precludes new initiatives or any bold and imaginative approach to the perilous puzzle of a divided world.

President Johnson is following the same course as Presidents Truman, Eisenhower and Kennedy. He is resisting Communist intervention in "wars of national liberation" as defined by Nikita Khrushchev in his famous speech of January, 1961, as a "sacred" duty. This is the official view reflected by the President and everyone in his administration.

While the Khrushchev speech gave the policy a new ideological justification it does not differ from American resistance to Communist threats in Iran, Greece and Korea.

YET DOUBT persists over the extended reach of the Johnson application of the policy of resisting "wars of national liberation." Brazil in this hemisphere is an example. In the spring of 1964 officials here were in a flap over what they considered an imminent take-over in Brazil by Communist-Castroite forces. This situation was resolved when Joao Goulart was overthrown by a military junta and his wavering regime replaced by a mild dictatorship.

"Obviously while we could send 20,000 Marines into the Dominican Republic, we could not send a million Marines into Brazil, a nation of 80,000,000 people," one of the President's advisers said.

The American nations cannot, must not and will not permit the establishment of another Communist government in the Western Hemisphere, the President declared in his May 2 speech. But circumstances will determine the form the resistance will take in a small Caribbean island or in the largest and most influential Latin nation.

This is another way of saying that the temperature of the Cold War is the determining factor. The President's advisers go back to the somber Kennedy-Khrushchev encounter in Vienna just four years ago when Khrushchev asserted the right to aid "wars of national liberation." That was when the die was cast.